

The thousands of hard-working, dedicated men and women of the Justice Department deserve at least this much, as do all Americans. Indeed, the founding principles and traditions of the 230-year-old Office of the Attorney General demand nothing less.

If there is nobody else seeking the floor right at the moment, let me just mention a personal observation. As a young law student at Georgetown, I was invited, along with three or four other law students from different leading law schools, to meet with the then-Attorney General. We were probably diverse in our opinions, but we were asked to be there because of our academic standing in our classes.

I remember sitting there with the Attorney General like it was yesterday. He talked about the meaning of the Department of Justice and how we have to represent the whole country, how it has to stand for the law.

One of us—and it may have been the young law student from Vermont—asked the question: What if you had somebody who had broken the law but they were close to the President? What would you do?

He said: If they had broken the law, we would prosecute them. He said: I might not be welcome at family gatherings for a while thereafter. He said that because that Attorney General was Robert Kennedy. His brother was the President. And actually that happened—a man very close and important to his brother's election as President. The matter was brought to Attorney General Kennedy, recommending his prosecution, and of course he was prosecuted. That is what an Attorney General should be.

I declined his offer to join the Department of Justice because my wife, myself, and I wanted to go back home to Vermont, and I thought probably I would never be involved with law enforcement after that.

A few years later, I was with the State's attorney of a county that had about a quarter of our population, and I was quickly faced with prosecuting leading Democrats and leading Republicans in our State.

I remembered what Attorney General Kennedy said. A prosecutor has to represent everybody. A prosecutor has to uphold the law. And I prosecuted those people. I have never regretted that.

I have always been supportive of Attorneys General who uphold the law—uphold the law because they are there to represent all Americans.

As long as I am in the Senate, I will always speak out when an Attorney General does not do the job they are supposed to do and when the Attorney General does not apply the law equally and fairly to all people—applying the law, not politics.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PENSIONS

Mr. BROWN. Madam President, another Congress is ending, a President's term is coming to a close, and, yet again, this Senate, the President, Washington have failed to address the pension crisis facing far too many workers.

The American people are tired of waiting for us to do our jobs, and they are tired of being told by Leader McConnell and President Trump: You are on your own.

The House has twice passed legislation that would address the multiemployer pension crisis, but under Leader McConnell the Senate has failed these Americans. As for the White House, I don't even think President Trump knows, much less cares, about the multiemployer pension crisis.

We ought to be working to support all the workers and retirees around the country whose lives have been upended during this pandemic, and that should include more than a million Americans in multiemployer pension system. After a lifetime of hard work and service to our country, they have already waited too long for Congress to do its job and to protect the benefits that these workers earned through a lifetime of work.

We have been trying to solve this crisis for years. The House has done its part. They passed the solution multiple times now. MITCH McCONNELL, the leader of the Senate, is deliberately blocking it, and his party and his Members and the President support him in blocking it.

Senate Republicans said this week that after a year of negotiating and talking to stakeholders, they made substantial progress toward a common ground, but then they released legislation that walked back all the progress that we had made. It is a betrayal of the people whom we serve.

This pension crisis affects retirees across the country of all political parties. Unions, chambers of commerce, and small businesses pretty much all agree that we need to get this done. Unfortunately, MITCH McCONNELL doesn't.

There is no excuse for Senate Republicans standing in the way of a deal. This only gets more expensive the longer we wait. The longer we wait, the harder it will be to solve this. We waited year after year after year while Senator McConnell has simply twiddled his thumbs.

The public health crisis and the economic crisis we are facing right now are not happening in a vacuum. The damage caused by the pandemic and the President's failures is layered on top of all the existing problems in our country, including the crisis facing these workers and retirees who are in danger of losing the retirement secu-

rity that they earned. I always emphasize "that they earned."

These pension plans were already in danger. Now the economic emergency we are in has put them in a worse position. We are talking about retirees who did everything right. They spent years working on assembly lines, bagging groceries, driving trucks, working construction—working hard to keep our economy going. Money came out of every single one of their paychecks to earn these pensions.

People in this town don't understand the collective bargaining process. People give up dollars today at the bargaining table for the promise of a secure retirement with good healthcare and a pension. Think about that. These workers are sitting around a table with their representatives, bargaining, collectively bargaining with management, saying: OK, we will take a smaller salary. We will take a smaller hourly wage today so that money will go into pensions and healthcare.

Yet because this Senate won't act, because Senator McConnell never calls us together to do this—to take care of workers—these workers are losing parts of their pension.

This crisis in my State affects thousands of people. It affects the massive Central States Pension Plan, the Bricklayers Local 7, the Iron Workers Local 17, the Ohio Southwest Carpenters Pension Plan, the Bakers and Confectioners Pension Plan, and on and on and on and on.

It touches every single State from Mississippi to Ohio, from Massachusetts to California—every State in this country. We are talking about our entire multiemployer pension system. If it collapses, it won't just be retirees who will feel the pain. Current workers will be stuck paying into pensions they will never receive.

Small businesses will be left drowning in pension liabilities they can't afford to pay—small businesses that have been in the family for generations. And there are a number of them in Ohio, businesses that people in this body will have heard of that make products they use. Small businesses and family businesses could face bankruptcy. Workers will lose jobs as businesses are forced to close up shop.

The effects will ripple across the entire country at a time when we can least afford it. We knew before the pandemic that this system could collapse. It is more likely to fail now. That is why the Senate must act.

We know who will get hurt the most if the system collapses. It is not Wall Street. It is never Wall Street when it comes to Senator McConnell. It is never Wall Street that gets hurt. It is small businesses. It is their employees. It is the people who make this country work. Their lives, their livelihoods will be devastated if Congress fails again.

Workers and retirees in Ohio and around the country have rallied in the name of Butch Lewis, a great Ohioan who helped lead this fight, who passed

away far too soon fighting for his fellow workers. His widow, Rita, has become my friend. She has continued this fight. She has become a leader and an inspiration to so many of us.

I brought her to the State of the Union twice. She has made the trip here over and over, along with so many workers and retirees. They travel all day and night on buses. They have rallied in the bitter cold of the winter and in hot DC summers. Their government, their majority leader, their President refuse to listen and turn their backs.

Rita once told me that retirees and workers struggling with this crisis feel like they are invisible. They feel like they are invisible. To far too many people in Washington, they are invisible. They are not invisible to me. They are not invisible to Speaker PELOSI or Leader SCHUMER or Senator SMITH or Senator PETERS or Chairman NEAL or Chairman SCOTT—all of whom have joined with me on fighting for this—and to so many colleagues who worked for years now trying to find a bipartisan solution. We won't give up until these retirees' benefits are protected.

It comes back to the dignity of work. When work has dignity, we honor the security—the retirement security—that people earned—again, sitting down at the bargaining table. Workers give up wages today to put money aside, matched by employers, generally, for the future, for this retirement.

They made the right decision back then, but we are not making the right decision right now as their pensions are in trouble. I urge my colleagues in this body—colleagues with healthcare and retirement plans paid for by taxpayers, all of us who are in this body—to think about these retired workers and the stress they are facing.

Join us. Let's pass a solution that honors their work. Let's honor their work. Let's honor the dignity of work. Let's keep our promise to them.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CORONAVIRUS

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, isn't it interesting? Here we are, Christmas week, the weekend before Christmas, and we are talking about needing targeted relief. Now, the Democrats have spent their year pushing off targeted relief. They have had their opportunities to tackle this issue. They have chosen not to tackle this issue. They have chosen to play politics with this issue. So, on the Saturday before Christmas, when we should be home and visiting with our families—I would love to be home with my children and grandchildren—here we are.

I honestly have decided that my friends across the aisle must not be paying very much attention to what is going on back home because the people back home in Tennessee are very frustrated with them. They seem out of touch. They seem to not care. They don't seem to be interested in taking care of people with needs who have been adversely impacted by COVID. They seem to be more interested in taking care of themselves.

This year really did not have to end this way. As I said, our friends across the aisle could have addressed this back in the summer. In July, the minority leader and his colleagues in the House immediately rejected our HEALS Act proposal in favor of Speaker PELOSI's mega-trillion-dollar—\$3 trillion—wish list that they had dubbed the "Heroes Act." You know, they always give such nice sounding names to things. Who could be against this? Yet they rejected the HEALS Act proposal that was targeted-specific relief and went with the Heroes Act.

It was a very partisan bill. It contained provisions that had nothing to do with COVID relief and that the House and Senate Democrats knew were going to be stumbling blocks. Their bill was filled with things—nothing to do with taking care of people, but, oh, they had it filled with poison pills. Why? They wanted to make certain that relief didn't come. They wanted to make certain that they could run this out and get it past the election. Then we found out from Speaker PELOSI herself and from some of the other Democrats who are in leadership why they did this. Oh, politics. It helped them with the election, they thought. They used people as pawns.

That Heroes Act that they continue to like to talk about would have undermined State voter ID requirements and given the green light to some ballot harvesting schemes. Isn't it interesting? What are we talking about? What are Tennesseans talking about so much? Yes, you got it—ballots, elections, some of the harvesting, some of the tricks. Those items they had in the Heroes Act didn't have anything to do with targeted relief, but do you know what? They were willing to play these games and to withhold that relief. Why? They thought it would help them in winning an election.

That was all back in July. Then comes September 10. The Democrats again block the forward motion on another targeted bill, throwing a procedural hurdle in between the American people and desperately needed relief. They got by with it in July, so September rolls along, and it is about time for people to start getting ballots and mailing in ballots. What do they do? They decide to mess with it again—to play politics, to use people as pawns.

They lower the bar even further on October 21, throwing away \$500 billion in targeted relief. They all vote no in an attempt to tear our focus away from

another round of funding for small businesses, support for schools, and more money for COVID-19 testing.

Think about this. Time and again, they say: Oh, we have to have more PPP. We have to have more unemployment insurance. We have to have more money for vaccines. We have to have more money for testing. We have to have more money for getting schools open. But they vote no. They have turned their backs on the American people repeatedly. They did it in July. They did it in September. They did it in October. They have turned their backs.

Think about what a plus-up of unemployment insurance would have done for a family had they decided to vote yes and worked with us in July. That would have been a lot of money if they had had that plus-up every single week through August, September, October, November, and December.

I mentioned the October 21 vote. One day earlier, on October 20, the Democrats had blocked Senate action to extend the PPP. That was for all of our small businesses—and yes, indeed, they are hurting. We are hearing from them on the phone and through email. They are begging for relief. The minority leader threw another possibility of compromise out the window by again insisting that the Democrats would accept the full Heroes Act or nothing. Isn't that amazing? That is what small businesses have gotten, is nothing, because my colleagues across the aisle have basically said: Give us everything we want, or we will just vote no. We will just leave people suffering.

It is not the Republicans who have voted no. The Republicans have consistently tried to help people, and my friends across the aisle are consistently trying to help themselves and use people as pawns.

At the beginning of this month, the minority leader took to the floor again. He rejected targeted relief again, and he demanded that the Republicans come to the table. Well, we have been at the table. They are the ones who reject proposal after proposal and don't want to move forward on things on which there is agreement. They want to hold out. They have not been paying attention to what is going on outside the four walls of this Chamber. They continue to say: We have to have money to bail out cities and States. They call it aid to cities and States, but they are bailouts for these big blue cities and States that were having problems long before lockdowns came along and that have really made an uncomfortable spot for themselves because of having irresponsible spending policies.

I know that Tennesseans do not want to see their tax dollars going to bail out people who have chosen to waste their taxpayers' dollars, and I can't help but wonder how much longer the Democrats are going to allow industries and small businesses and individuals to twist in the wind because they